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OF
SAUNDERS WATSON.
GHOST OF BILL JONES.
MYSTERIOUS MURDERS.



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REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE



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THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE.

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REMARKABLE FAMILY ADVENTURE

OF

SAUNDERS WATSON.

In a remote country parish in the south of Scotland, the above worthy personage was born, bred, and married, and became the father of a family, consisting of one son, named after himself, and three daughters. He rented a few acres of ground, sufficient to graze two cows and to keep one horse; and he had, by the greatest industry, brought up and educated his family in a manner suited to his circumstances---that is, they were quite equal to the task of reading the first chapter of Chronicles, and the tenth of Nehemiah, distinctly. They could also perform the Rule of Three, and write "half-text" hand by the help of *squaring*---a mode which honest Saunders made them always adhere to; for he said they "just spoilt paper wi' making lines as crooked as rainbows, when they had nought to guide their han' frae ae side o' the sheet to the ither." As to the item of dancing, they had each, by dint of incessant solicitation,

gained their faither's consent to attend a teacher of that art during a fortnight; but as they happend, according to Saunders's phrase, to have "nae ear for music," it was merely time and money wasted. Saunders, who had always a great antipathy to such amusements, was no way sorry at the dullness of his family; but it was not till a year or two had elapsed that he could contemplate with any degree of patience the circumstance of his mispending his money so; and as his much loved partner, Tibby, had given her vote in favour of the children on that occasion, he very frequently felt disposed to question her prudence in future when any thing material came under consideration. Upon this principle he determined not to send them to a singing school, but to endeavour to give them what he called "a swatch o' that branch o' lear' himself. Five church tunes were his whole stock, and these too had lost many a note and quaver in his hands; but he thought he knew them in perfection, and besides giving his pupils two or three lessons each day, they were enjoined to be most attentive in accompanying him while at the "buik" so that no opportunity of improvement might be lost. Saunders was nearly as unsuccessful in this department as the dancing-master had been in his; for though the girls made some little

progress, young Sandy was altogether intractible. His father, after labouring very patiently with him for some time, at last remarked to Tibby that it was "needless learning folk the thing they couldna learn," and relinquished wholly the task of teaching. This is an accurate view of the extent of education possessed by the family of Saunders Watson. Yet they were as well as any around them in this respect; and the daughters when grown up, were allowed to be not only sensible, but fair and amiable. Young Sandy wrought and carted along with his father, and was just on the point of venturing upon matrimony, when his eldest sister, Mary, caught a severe fever and died. This sad event threw the whole family into the utmost grief. Saunders bore it with a fortitude somewhat approaching to philosophy,---though nothing of the stoic was mingled with his feelings.---but Tibby and the two remaining daughters were more vocal in their woe, notwithstanding of all the consolation which Saunders endeavoured to administer to them. The whole neighbourhood flocked round the hapless family upon this occasion to join in the work of comfort, for Saunders and his wife with the whole of his children, were loved and respected by every one.

This was about the time when the greatest

alarm prevailed, and the most fearful stories were circulating through the country regarding the resurrectionists, as they are appropriately called. In consequence of this, Saunders in a solemn divan of his neighbours, came to the resolution of watching his daughter's grave, for a fortnight or so, till decay should have so far done its work as to render the corpse of no use to any anatomist. Every neighbour cheerfully volunteered his services in this pious work, and on the night after the funeral, two men were accordingly appointed sentinels, well armed with large sticks, a musquet each, and several rounds of shot.

The church-yard was a spot which from its retired situation,---without a house, save the church, within a quarter of a mile of it,---seemed the very sanctuary of holiness and solitude. It was surrounded with a strong high dyke, on the outside of which a line of tall ash trees formed a second circle; so that nothing of the external world was visible to an internal observer, save the tops of two long parallel ranges of mountains that walled in the valley, or rather the glen. The church stood in gloomy loneliness on the top of a small knoll, exactly in the centre of the burying ground. From thence the earth fell with a gradual inclination on all sides, towards the dyke, close to the inside of which

and almost overshadowed by the trees, a crowded line of white through-stones gleamed like spectres through the darkness. There was a small house attached to the end of the church, in which the sessions were generally held, where the sexton's tools were deposited, and into which the rope attached to the bell descended. It was here the sentinels took their station. The small gothic window in front looked directly towards Mary's grave, and as the sexton had given them the key, they could, by locking the door on the inside, watch, secure from the weather, and unseen by any one.

Three nights passed in this manner, without any remarkable occurrence. On the fourth old Saunders and his son insisted on taking their turn in watching; and they repaired to the church-yard accordingly; the father with the Scots Worthies, and the big ha' Bible under his arm, and the son with two guns over his shoulder, an ox-horn full of powder, a small bladder of shot, and a pocketfull of his mother's coarse tow, for colfins. It was then the month of March, when the days and nights are equal; and as it happened to be clear moonlight at the time, Saunders would not allow his son to bring a candle with him, "for" said he, as they travelled along, "if ony o' thae grave houkin' villians sud be sculkin about, and

see a licht i' the session-hoose, there's nae saying what they micht do to us to get their en's efflecket." "Then, faither," said Saundy, what's the use o' taking ony buiks wi' ye? I'm sure, when ye canna read without specks at a burnin' cannle, ye'll far less can read ony at the moon."

"Tut, tut, bairn!" said Saunders, "they are ay gude to hae aside ane, make what use o' them ye like. Gude knows what kin' o' faes we may hae to contend wi' afore mornin', an' mony an evil speerit has been fleyed awa wi' the word o' Gude, whan nocht else wud do at them." "Then" replied Saundy, "if we're to hae only thae kin' o' craitirs to deal wi', it was needless takin' the guns wi' us. What can guns do at speerits?" "Stupit gomeril!" cried his father, "isna the guns to be used against ony arm o' flesh we may hae to contend wi'? D'ye think I'm daft enough to believe that speerits could be hurt wi' them? If ye see ony body comin' aboot the grave, yee'll shoot an' I'll tak' the buiks in my han'." "Na, faither, ye maun shoot, an' I'll do that," said Saundy, "Gosh! I never fired a gun in my life; an' if she strikes back, and knocks me owre, than I'll miss my aim, an' oo'll baith be murdered!" "Tut, come awa, bletherin'!" said his father---"ye see it's gettin' dark already; an' if we're no there

soon oo'll maybe hae been owre lang o' gaun."

They reached the church-yard,---saw that the grave was untouched, and locked themselves up securely in the session-house. It was now dark; the moon had yet an hour to remain behind the hill; and their lonely situation, the solemnity of the place,---the mournful sigh of the wind among the trees, and the ghost-like appearance of the white grave-stones, as indistinctly seen from the window, inspired them with feelings of a very unearthly character.

"Bless us, bairn," said Saunders, "what an awsome thing it is to be surrounded wi' sae mony o' the deed at this time o' nicht! D'ye hear the bell creaking on it's axle-tree aboon our heads there, an' thae waesome voices it the wun makes amang the trees? We're really within the shadow o' death! 'A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death without any order, and where the light is as darkness.'---Job Tent and Twunty-secunt. What a mercy it is I hae some bits o' the Bible on my tongue the nicht! Can ye say ony o't, Saundy?" "Hoot, binna sae feart, faither!" replied Saunday; "I'm no giftit wi' scrip-tir; but I'll say ye a piece o' a hymn it I hae in my memory, an' it I think suits the occasion—

{ “ O Mary ! dear departed shade !
Where is thy place of———”

“ Whist ! whist !” interrupted Saunders with horror. D’ye no k’en ye stupe, it that’s a piece o’ ane o’ Burns’s sangs ? Gude forgie us ! I wus nocht ill may happen us for sic profanity ! lāy the Scots Worthies aneath ye’r elbow on the wundow-sole there, and had ye’r peace a thegither, if ye canna say ony thing better.”

It was a place, however, where speaking could alōne keep up their spirits ; and Saunders was obliged, in a little while, to break the law of silence he had so hastily imposed. At length the moon appeared over the edge of the hill ; and never did patriarch of old hail with grater pleasure a celestial messenger descending to visit him, than they did the presence of the efulgent luminary, as she lifted her broad face in tranqul sublimity from the top of the mountain, and seem’d to transfer herself at once into the blue arch of heaven. All things now began to assume a different aspect. Every tree had its gigantic shaddow that stretched like a leviathan along the church-yard, and cōceaied within its range a vast number of graves. The old gothic church stood by itself like a plānet half eclipsed, with the shadows of some of the taller trees advanced half-way up its wall, very much in the form of butresses ; while

the light that now gleamed in at the windows, shed a faint twillight radiance through the deep obscurity that formerly reigned within it. Saunders and his son now became visible to each other, for the first time since they had entered the Session-house. They were placed opposite to each other, one on either side of window---Saundy with his elbow leaning upon the Scots Worthies, as he had been commanded, and his father in the same relative position with regard to the Ha' Bible. The moonbeams were scarcely powerful enough to penetrate the damp hazy air of their dreary apartment; yet the light was sufficient to disclose the sexton's tools, lying huddled together in one of its corners at a little distance. Saunders was just about to make some melancholy remark on the sad service they had lately been employed in upon his account, when his son, who had been gazing through the window for a few seconds, touched his father's knee with the point of his finger, and whispered in a state of great alarm, "O faither, what's that I hear aboot Mary's grave!"

This direful whisper acted like the discharge of an electric battery upon the nerves of Saunders, His whole body shook like a person under a fit of ague; his blood curdled with horror at the thought of the unhallowed purpose for which any person could be

disturbing the mansions of the dead at the hour of midnight, and his fancy arming the intruders with every thing formidable, made his heart almost cease to beat, from terror for his own safety. His son was in no better plight. They both gazed like statues before the window, but neither of them had breath sufficient to say a single word to the other.

It so happened that the shadow of a tree had fallen directly over the grave which their eyes were in quest of, so that it was hardly recognisable;---it seemed a mere dim speck swimming amidst a wave of invisibility. Nothing at first was to be seen, but their ears informed them distinctly enough, that something was busy about the depository of Mary's remains. Terror, like every other tyrant, can only go a certain length till the powers it has subdued, forcibly resume their functions, and make it turn their slave. The mind of Saunders had now reached this climax; a kind of desperate resolution succeeded to his former cowardice, and snatching a gun, he thrust it into his son's hand and ordered him in a firm tone to fire through the window. "What! an' break a' the glass, an' maybe blaw some spelks o't about my ain face?" cried Saundy, in despair, at such a proposition. "O faither, think what an awfu' remnish it wad mak' in the inside

o' a kirk that has sounin' balls in its ceil-in." By this time the paroxysm that made Saunders dictate so summary a measure had somewhat subsided. He began by degrees to sink nearer to his constitutional level; and as he had never been remarkable for bravery, he did not well know how to answer the objections of his son, or what means to adopt, compatible with his own safety, for the preservation of his daughter's corpse. But to his great joy, he was relieved from this dilemma by observing that the window opened to the inside upon hinges. "Deed ye'r no far wrang bairn," he at length whispered cautiously. "But coodna ye open the window withoot ony noise, and play pap at them that way? for the door maunna be set up at nae rate. Oo maun keep oursels safe within the hoose, Sandy." "But will't no be murder, faither, to shoot without gien' them timeous warnin'?" said Sandy. "Bless me, bairn, what a mercy ye thought on that! We maunna bring ony man's blood aboon oor heads. But than if we speak, they'll fin' us oot, an' maybe massacre us afore we hae time to fire, suld it sae happen it they'r no aimin to tak' their heels for't." "Keep us, ay, faither! I'se warran' that be the upshot o't. Here tak' ye the gun, for I darna shoot her. I'm a' trimmlin wi' fear. O hear that, faither! what a wark

they'r makin.' If we're no fast they'll hae oot the coffin. I think I hear them dunnerrin' on the lid o't already !”

There was, in truth, something about the grave making a considerable noise ; but still the shadow of the tree prevented them from discovering it. At times, however, they thought they could perceive a low figure moving a little upon the top of the grave ; and as imagination had full liberty to invest it with whatever shape and attributes it pleased, the trembling father and son had not a doubt of its being one of a party of resurrectionists.

“ For heeven's sake,” Saundy, cried the afflicted father, “ lay the barrel o' the gun ower the wundow-sole, and that'll steddily her ! Ye maun shoot ; an' I'll stan' near ye wi' the Bible i' my han', and cry at them afore ye draw the tricker. They'll maybe rin aff an' than there'll be nae blood shed.” “ O stan' ahin me then, faither, an' kep me if I'm knocket back ower when she gaes aff ! I doot she's to strike terribly.” I'll do that my bairn.---Noo, ye'r ready, I'll cry at them, and I'll pu ye'r coat tails when ye'r to fire”, Saundy groaned assent for his fears had deprived him of speech ; and the father laying the Bible upon his son's shoulders, and leaning forward along upon his back with his hands upon it, cried out

in as loud a tone as he could then raise his voice to, "I ' Guide's name, what ir ye, or what is't ye'r seeking here at this time o' nicht? No answer was made, but the figure still kept moving as formerly. "I ax ye again what ye ir? "cried Saunders---"speak or oo'll blaw ye'r brains oot. Dinna think oo'll let the graves o' the dead be rifled in oor presence. "This appeal was as unsuccessful as the former one. Saunders's embarrassment increased; for he was resolved to call only a third time. "I warn ye again to quat ye're unhallowed wark and let the dead lie. I'll no speak anither time, as Gude's my help. "His last call was equally disregarded. With a trembling hand Saunders now pulled his son's coat skirts; and with a not less trembling hand did his son venture to take aim and pull the trigger. Wonderful to relate, the shot took effect; for first a kind of shriek, and then a few deep sobs, announced the death of some creature or other.

Saundy did not fall backward as he had dreaded; but his father, on hearing the shriek of their victim, fell forward upon him, and crushed him, along with the Bible, to the floor, the bell rope happened to be dangling over the place; the hapless son grasped it in the unconciousness of his terror, and in striving to raise himself by it, set the

bell a-ringing. This however, was not heard by either of them at the moment; and Saundy after repeated tugs, got his body dragged from under his father, and raised himself, by it's help, to his legs again. His first attempt was to place his father in the same position; but the fright had deprived him, if not of life, at least of motion. "Preserve us," cried Saundy in utter despair, "am I left here alane, the only leevin craitor in this horrid place!" "I'm no deed, my bairn," sighed his father, as he recovered and sat up on the floor. "Len me ye'r han I beseech ye, an' let us in frae this shame o' dreed an' calamity. Gude kens what may be the upshot o' this wark. I doot oo sudna hae shot sae soon; an' ye ken if we're fun here, oo may be hanged for murder, for oo hae nae witnesses to prove it did in a just cause."

This was a joyous proposal for Saundy. He speedily picked up the two guns, the Bible, and the Scots Worthies, and taking his father's hand as desired, had unlocked the door, and was just about to set his foot over the threshold, when to his consternation, he heard the sound of a number of people running towards the kirk stile. The firing of the gun and the ringing of the bell had alarmed the whole neighbourhood. Every one started out of bed and made for the

church-yard at full speed in the expectation of finding either Saunders Watson or some other person a corpse; even the pastor himself was among there crowd. The alarm of Saunders and his son may well be conceived, when they saw the church-yard gate thrown open, and so many people running pell-mell towards the spot where the tragedy had been acted. Neither of them had power to shut the door. Each leaned himself against the wall, more dead than alive, till they heard a well known voice exclaim, in a tone of agreeable, but somewhat mirthful surprise, "Preserve us, here's the minister's swine lyin' cauld deed! I'll 'ay my lug for't. Saunders has taen't for a ressurection man, and shot it in that belief."

Notwithstanding the sacredness of the place, and their feeling of sympathy for Saunders's late misfortune, a general burst of laughter followed this announcement. The two heroes were sought for, and found, who both joyful at, and ashamed, of their mistake, scarcely knew what kind of a face to put upon the matter. They were the most afraid to face the minister; but he very good naturedly relieved them from their embarrassment, by observing that as the pig had broken loose, and strayed where it ought not to do, it in some measure deserved its punishment; and as for himself he set

no value on such a trifle, in comparison with the satisfaction he felt at having his fears disappointed.

Two of the men now offered to watch till daylight; but, at the suggestion of the minister, it was unanimously agreed that they should all go back to their beds, as the morning was now too far advanced to allow of any resurrectionary schemes being attempted. A large party of them attended Saunders to his own door, some carrying his books and others easing young Saundy of both his guns; and from that time forward the word resurrectionist has always been associated with other ideas than those of fear among the people in the native parish of Sunders Watson.

A GHOST STORY.

The narrator had in his youth gone mate of a slave-vessel from Liverpool, of which town he seemed to be a native. The captain of the vessel was a man of variable temper, sometimes kind and courteous to his men, but subject to fits of humour, dislike, and passion, during which he was very violent, tyrannical, and cruel. He took a

particular dislike at one sailor abroad, an elderly man, called Bill Jones, or some such name. He seldom spoke to this man without threats and abuse, which the old man, with the licence which sailors take in merchant vessels, was very apt to return. On one occasion Bill Jones appeared slow in getting on the yard to hand a sail. The captain, according to custom, abused the seaman as a lubberly rascal, who got fat by leaving his duty to other people. The man made a saucy answer, almost amounting to mutiny, on which, in a towering passion, the captain ran down to his cabin, and returned with a blunderbuss loaded with slugs, with which he took deliberate aim at the supposed mutineer, fired, and mortally wounded him. The man was handed down from the yard, and stretched on the deck, evidently dying. He fixed his eyes on the captain, and said, 'Sir, you have done for me, but I will never leave you.' The captain, in return, swore at him for a fat lubber, and said, he would have him thrown in the slave kettle when they made food for the negroes, and see how much fat he had got; the man died; his body was actually thrown into the slave kettle, and---the narrator observed, with a 'naivete' which confirmed the extent of his own belief in the truth of what he told---there was not much fat about

him, after all. The captain told the crew they must keep perfect silence on the subject of what had passed, and as the mate was not willing to give an absolute and explicit promise, he ordered him to be confined below. After a day or two he came to the mate, and demanded if he had an intention to deliver him up for trial when the vessel got home; the mate, who was tired of close confinement in that sultry climate, spoke his commander fair, and obtained his liberty. When he mingled among the crew once more, he found them impressed with the idea, not unnatural in their situation, that the ghost of the dead man appeared among them, when they had a spell of duty, especially if a sail was to be handed, on which occasion the spectre was sure to be out upon the yard before any of the crew; the narrator has seen this apparition himself repeatedly---he believed the captain saw it also, but he took no notice of it for some time, and the crew, terrified at the violent temper of the man, dared not call his attention to it. Thus they held on their course homeward, with great fear and anxiety; at length, the captain invited the mate, who was now in some sort of favour, to go down to the cabin, and take a glass of grog with him; in this interview he assumed a very grave and anxious aspect: ‘I need not tell you, Jack,

what sort of a hand we have got on board with us---he told me he would never leave me, and he has kept his word---you only see him now and then, but he is always by my side, and never out of sight. At this very moment I see him---I have determined to bear it no longer, and I have resolved to leave you.' The mate replied, that his leaving the vessel while out of sight of land was impossible; he advised, that if the captain apprehended any bad consequences from what had happened, he should run for the west of France or Ireland, and there go ashore and leave him, the mate, to carry the vessel into Liverpool. The captain only shook his head gloomily and reiterated his determination to leave the ship. At this moment the mate was called to the deck for some purpose or other, and the instant he got up the companion-ladder he heard a plash in the water, and, looking over the ship's side, saw that the captain had thrown himself into the sea from the quarter-gallery, and was running astern at the rate of six knots an hour. When just about to sink, he seemed to make a last exertion, sprung half out of the water, and clasped his hands towards the mate, calling, 'By-----, Bill Jones is with me now!' and then sunk, to be seen no more.

MYSTERIOUS MURDERS AT PARIS.

The murder of M. de Savary, which occurred in 1720, occasioned considerable noise at Paris. He was a sort of philosopher---a follower of Epicurus. Not being a married man, and being very partial to company, his house was the resort of many of the courtiers and wits of Paris, where the pleasures of life were indulged in. He kept a very small establishment, consisting only of a valet and a female cook. One day, when he was at home without company, a person paid him a visit. M. de Savary received him in a most polite manner, and the individual said he would stay and dine with him, to which M. de S. signified his pleasure. This person knew the small establishment of his host well. The valet was sent by his master into the cellar for some Champagne, and the guest followed him. As soon as the man had got into the cellar, he was knocked down and killed with a mallet by the stranger, who had suddenly picked it up from the floor on entering. A dog which was there was then despatched with the same weapon, lest the animal should bark and alarm M. de Savary. The individual who had thus cruelly slain the poor valet, entered the kitchen where the cook

was preparing some fricasseed fowls for dinner, and he treated her in the same manner, knocking her down before she was aware what he was going to do. Having destroyed the two servants and the dog, he ran into M. de Savary's apartment, and killed him in a similar manner: the latter was unarmed, and consequently could not defend himself, neither was he in a condition of body to exercise much strength, inasmuch as he was a cripple. The perpetrator of these dreadful murders wrote in a book which was lying on the table the account above given; he, however, did not write his name. A clock stood on the mantle-piece of the room, ornamented with a skull cut in ivory, under which was this inscription: 'Look on this, that you may regulate your life.' Some one (it is supposed to be the murderer) wrote in pencil underneath, 'Look at his life, and you will not be surprised at his death.' The murderer having satisfied his vengeance, closed the door and went away, without any one knowing what a deed had been perpetrated. The door was afterwards forced open, and the three dead bodies found. Very little blood had flown from any of the unhappy victims, their heads being crushed by the mallet. The dinner table was found properly laid out, and not a single piece of silver was missing; so that it clearly appear-

ed robbery was not the end which the murderer had in view. The officers of justice were made acquainted with the circumstance, and some persons were appointed to examine the papers belonging to M. de Savary, among which was found a letter in a lady's hand, addressed to him. It was in these words:---'We are lost! My husband has just learned all: think of some means to avert his anger. Parapel is the only one who can restore him to reason. Let him speak to my husband, for, unless he does, we have no hope of safety.' This letter had no signature, neither was it dated. Parapel, whose name was mentioned in it, was arrested; but he was liberated again, after stating that he knew not what it meant. He acknowledged being acquainted with M. de Savary, having occasionally been at his house. But then it was well known that many gay men were in the habit of going there, among whom were the Duke de Vendome, and some courtiers. Several people were arrested on suspicion of being implicated in the murderous transaction, but they were afterwards liberated, and the affair is still involved in mystery.



